NEW LIGHT ON THE HOLY BIBLE.

THE TAMIL THAT JESUS SPOKE.

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M. S. RAMASWAMI AIYAR, B.A., M.R.A.S.

DEPUTY SUPERINTENDENT OF POLICE.

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I

EPHPHATHA—செப்படா.

The story in which the word Ephphatha occurs is thus:—

Mark Chapter VII.

"(Ver. 31) And again departing from the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, he came unto the Sea of Galilee, through the midst of the coasts of Decopolis. (Ver. 32) And they bring unto him one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech and they beseach him to put his hand upon him. (Ver. 33) And he took him aside from the multi-

tude, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spit and touched his tongue; (Ver.34) And looking up to heaven, he sighed and saith unto him Ephphatha that is, Be opened. (Ver. 35) And straightaway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue (was loosed) and he spake plain. (Ver. 36) And he charged them that they should tell no man; but the more he charged them, so much the more a great deal they published it; (Ver, 37) And were beyond measure astonished, saying, He hath done all things well; he maketh both the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak."

In explaining Biblical expressions, it has been my practice to quote first the commentaries of theologians and to show from the writings of these people themselves, how far Biblical translations are correct and how much these gentlemen have understood the expressions in question. Following the practice, let me give at the outset on the present occasion too the commentary of a scholar on the Biblical passage quoted above. Before reproducing the commentary, it is necessary to inform the reader (for the better understanding of what follows) that the different Gospels of Mark as they exist in the various languages of Europe today are all translations of a primary Greek Mark and (it is thought now by some scholars) that the

primary Greek Mark itself is a translation of an original Aramaic Mark which is a lost book now. To put it briefly the descending order of the versions is English Mark-- Greek Mark—Aramaic Mark. In other words the English Mark is the latest and the Aramaic Mark the earliest version.

With these few words by way of preface let me give Rev. Morison's commentary, on Verses 34 and 35. It is as follows:—"(Ver. 34) Ephphatha 'And saith unto him Ephphatha (that is Be opened) or Be thou opened, as both Wycliffe and the Rheims correctly give it. It is the man who is addressed. It is he who needed to be corporeally opened to the ingress of sounds and the ready regress of words. The Aramaic imperative Ethpathach or in its abbreviated form, Ethpach and the corresponding expressions in Greek and English are applicable both to the organs of hearing and to the organ of speech, not strictly indeed the tongue, but strictly to the mouth as a whole. Hence we read of Zacharias in Luke 1. 64 and his mouth was opened immediately, and his tongue (loosed), and he spake and praised God. There is no word for loosed in the original.' The word opened stretches as it were overshadowingly, beyond its appropriate object, mouth, and is freely applied to the tongue, in the manner called zeugma

by grammarians. In the passage before us there is some what of the same figure of speech, connecting the mouth with the ears; for in Ver. 35 there is no explicit reference to the opening of the mouth ... (Ver. 35) And he spake plain, or right. The former is Coverdale's word, and the Rheims' too; the latter is Wycliffe's (rightly). The fact that the man spoke rightly seems to make it certain that he had not been, as Peter expresses it 'stark dumb' before, absolutely a deaf-mute, and that hence his infirmity had not been congenital. He had once heard well enough; and he could speak well enough; but either by some external accident or by an internal disease, he had lost his hearing entirely; and could only utter, with awkwardness, a limited number of articulate sounds." The reader will do well to go through the commentary carefully, as I shall use it much.

The English Bible translates the Aramaic Ephphatha as Be opened. The English word open means to uncover, expose, etc. But if the word Ephphatha uttered by Jesus be understood in that sense a difficulty arises. The word open may freely be applied in a metaphorical sense to the ears and the mouth but it can never be applied to the tongue. That is why, while we ask a man to open or shut his ears and the mouth, we do

not use the same words when refering to his tongue. We ask a man to wag or hold his tongue. But the word open, in the Biblical passage in question, is applied to the tongue as well.

Now a man goes to seek help only when he is in difficulties, not otherwise. No doubt Rev. Morison looks up to "the manner called zeugma by grammarians" to explain the unsuitable English expression "Be opened" with his curious statement "not strictly indeed the tongue but strictly to the mouth as a hole." "In the passage before us there is somewhat of the same figure of speech, connecting the mouth with the ears" says he again. There is either a figure of speech in the passage before us or there is no figure of speech in it. How there can be somewhat of a figure of speech in a passage, surpasses my comprehension. Th ecommentary is as difficult to understand as the Biblical expression it tries to explain. In any case the fact of Rev. Morison's going to zeugma for seeking 'overshadowing" help together with his unintelligible statement that there is somewhat of a figure of speech in the passage plus that portion of the commentary which states that the word opened is stretched beyond its appropriate object the mouth and is freely made to apply to the tongue, bring out fully the difficulties felt by scholars

like Rev. Morison in properly explaining the expression Ephphatha. Rev. Morison's commentary plainly indicates (except to him who will not see) that "Be opened" given as the translation of Ephphatha in the English Bible cannot be the correct meaning.

It was stated before that the descending order of versions is English Mark, Greek Mark, Aramaic Mark. If the English Mark is of no avail let us turn to the Greek Mark. The Greek Mark beeing the nearest in point of time to the Aramaic Mark might perchance enable us to see in what sense the Armaic word should be understood. What is the translation given in the Greek text of Ephphatha? It is thianoichtheeti. Robinson's Greek and English Lexicon of the New Testament gives in all five meanings under the word thianoigo. It is unnecessary to quote the Lexicon here. It will be sufficient if I state now that the Lexicon gives open, open fully as the meaning of the Greek word. And in the examples given with references in the Lexicon it is applied in a metaphorical sense to the womb, ears, eyes, heart etc. But one curious fact to note is that the Lexicon does not give even one instance (other than the one under discussion) where the Greek word is applied to the tongue. A reference to the Greek

Mark shows that the translators of the English Bible have (without caring to examine whether the Greek rendering of Ephphatha is correct or not) turned the Greek thianoicheeti into the English 'Be opened.' Even the earlier Greek version does not help us and the Aramaic Mark is a lost book now. We have to fall back therefore on the term Ephphatha itself to see what its precise meaning could be. Since we are thrown on ourselves we may examine the problem anew.

Let me restate the story briefly for discussion. A man that is defective of hearing and had an impediment in speech was brought to Jesus for being healed. What did Jesus do? He took him aside, put his fingers into his ears, touched (not his throat nor his mouth but) his tongue, looked up to heaven, then turned to the man brought to him and told him Ephphatha. The actions of Jesus had their immediate effect and verse 35 tells us in what way the instantanious effect showed itself —straightaway the man spake plain. Facts mentioned above contain all the clues necessary to give us a solution of the problem? How?

It is the man who is addressed, remarks Rev. Morison in the commentary. Yes. The term Ephphatha hence is not a term expressing a wish or a prayer to heaven, but a word of com-

mand given by Jesus to the person before him. Ephphatha is a word of command: that is inference No. 1.

It is the man who is addressed, remarks Rev. Morison in his commentary. Yes, let me repeat it again to rub it into the reader. Ephphatha is a word of command. When Jesus said Ephphatha, he would have not asked the man to open his ears for ears are always open and there is no way (except by some kind of action) by which he could show to the world that his ears had been opened (metaphorically); nor would Jesus have asked him to open his tongue for the term cannot be applied to that organ. If Jesus on the other hand, meant by Ephphatha that the individual should open his mouth, he would have opened his mouth and kept it in that condition with-out doing anything further, for he would do only what Jesus asked him to do. Verse 35 however as Rev. Morison has carefully pointed out and as the reader would see it for himself, makes no reference whatever to the opening of the mouth but only to speaking. In these circumstances whatever might be the meaning of Ephphatha, it cannot certainly have any reference to opening. That is inference No. 2.

The man that was brought to Jesus had two defects. He was deaf and he was dumb. The organ connected with these defects are the ears and the tongue. In the words of Rev. Morison, the man "needed to be corporally opened to the ingress of sounds and the ready regress of words." Jesus therefore touched just these, two organs (ears and tongue) and none else to cure them of their defects with his personal magnetism. After this Jesus wanted to demonstrate to the (deaf and dumb) man himself as also to others, that were present on the occasion, that the man had been cured. How could this be done? Jesus would do it by ordering him to perform some kind of action. The word given must be a word of order for the performance of some action. If the man had been deaf and had paralysis of leg, Jesus would have touched his ears and legs and said—walk. The man would have heard the word of command 'walk' and straightaway got up and walked. But the man brought to Jesus was deaf and dumb. How to demonstrate the healing of such person? What word of command would Jesus use on an occasion like the present one. Does not the touching of the tongue indicate to us what word it is? It must be some word which has reference to (in the language of Rev. Morison) "the ready regress of words." That is inference No. 3.

Let us push our logic further. Analogies are useful since they enable us to take a right view of difficult problems. Let us suppose a villager who does not know English, to watch a party of policemen drilled by its Inspector. Suppose this man to hear with his ears cautions like Quick March, Right turn, Left turn, Halt, Fire and to see with his eyes the policemen perform certain actions immediately on hearing the cautions. Though the villager may not know English yet if he were an intelligent man, he would infer that the English expressions he heard were orders for what the men did and he would be right. Now Jesus uttered a word and the man brought to him performed a particular action on hearing the word. Would we be wrong if we follow the hypothetical person of our illustration in the case on hand? The deaf and the dumb man must have done what Jesus asked him to do. Since the man spoke immediately (as stated in verse 35) on the word being uttered by Jesus, Ephphatha must have reference to speaking. We would be justified in drawing this most important conclusion from what is called the "internal evidence" provided by the Biblical verses themselves. Ephphatha hence has referance to speaking. That is the 4th or final inference. We must now find out what word it is.

In a previous article it was shown that the

last three letters aic of the word Aramaic are a European termination aud that the language (his mother-tongue) that Jesus spoke was Aram—Aravam—Tamil. Scholars inform us that Galilean Aramaic was laughed at by the Pharisees of Jerusalem owing to his corrupt pronunciation; that means it was a slang form of speech. If Aramaic is Tamil and if Galilean Aramaic is a form of slang speech, Galilian Aramaic is slang Tamil. That stands to reason. Ephphatha is an expression of Galilean Aramaic and it has reference (as we found out, not to opening but) to speaking. Since Galilean Aramaic is slang Tamil, Ephphatha must be a corrupt Tamil word signifying speaking. What word is it ? In our attempt to find it out let us not over-look the facts, that Jesus lived two thousand years ago, and that that saintly man born of the people for the people spoke the language of the people and that the speech he spoke was a corrupt one and it is two thousand years old.

It is a well-known law of Philology, that j.ch. and s interchange with y or i—Eg. John-Yohan, Jasher-Yasher, Jesu-Yesu, Sindhu-Indu, சாமம்-யாமம். முசல். முயல். Now சின்ன (sinna) அத்தி (aththi) is சித்தி (sithi) aunt. This சித்தி (siththi) becomes இத்தி (itthi) in common parlance. செப்பு (seppu) to speak is both Telugu and Tamil. செப்படா (seppada)

would on the same anology become எப்படா (Eppada) Strong slang form of it would be எப்பட்டா (Eppatta) and this is precisely the expression (Ephphatha) uttered by Jesus. I shall give a test to show the reader that I am correct. Now எ (ey) and ஒ (o) or interchangeable letters—Eg. ரெம்ப (remba) ரொம்ப (romba), பெட்டி (petty) பொட்டி (potty), Jeshua—Joshua. The modern Tamil word ஒப்பிடா (oppida) of the Tamil பாடத்தை or பாட்டையொப்பிடா must hence be a variant of an ancient எப்படா (Eppada) which as we just found, is a variant form of செப்படா (seppada) meaning to speak. Without எப்படா (eppada) ஒப்பிடா (oppida) has no foundation. Attention of scholars has not yet been directed to the study of provincial and spoken Tamil, past and present.

The expression Ephphatha uttered by Jesus (looked at from whatever point of view) means therefore to speak and not to open as translated in the Greek or in the English Bible. That speak is the meaning of the word is still further supported by two words furnished by no less a person than Rev. Morison himself in his commentary. Ethpathach and Ethpich. பிதற்று (pithatru) or பேத்து (pethu) means to talk or blabber and பேசு (pesu) means to speak. எட்டிப்பிதற்று or எட்டிப்பேத்து and எட்டிப்பேசு mean to talk or blabber loudly and to

speak loudly. Ethpatbach is apparently a slang variation of எட்டிபிதற்று or எட்டிப்பேதது. The two words given by Rev. Mersion therefore are எட்டிப்பிதற்று or எட்டிப்பேத்து and எட்டிப்பேசு. And these words suit the context and the occasion. In these circumstances, is not the expression uttered by Jesus (Ephphatha) the same as செப்படா (seppada). Further proof to a Tamilian is unnecessary.

If Ephphatha means to speak, how did great and good men of the West render it open, it might be asked. Well in my younger days a book called 'Short Stories' was in use in our schools. And there was one particularly interesting little story in that book. It appears the King of Italy once paid a visit to an Italian town. Arrangements were made to receive him with due pomp and state. As the townsmen did not know Court etiquette, the Mayor of the town instructed them that they should closely watch him and do as he did at the time of the reception. The King came and the Mayor accompained by the citizens went to receive him. The Mayor unfortunately slipped and fell, when he neared his Sovereign. The citizens did likewise; they also slipped and fell down. The translators of the English Bible have done precisely what the citizens of the Italian town did. Verse 35 says "and the string of the tongue

was loosed." Rev. Morison remarks that there is no word for loosed in the original. The translators of the English Bible no doubt supplied the words "was loosed" to make the meaning clear. That is why I have put these words within brackets in the Bibilical verses quoted at the begining of the article.

A little hard thinking would show that a Zeugma is possible in Verse 35 only if the Aramaic Mark was Tamil Mark, that an original Aramaic Mark should have existed containg Zeugma in Verse 35, that the translators of the Greek Mark should have brought in the Zeugma in Verse 35 of their Greek text (though inappropriate and impossible in Greek text) because such a figure of speech existed in the original Aramaic Mark and finally that the translators of the Greek Mark should have been misled into making a wrong translation of the word uttered by Jesus owing to the similarity of its sound to the Zeugma word of the Aramaic text. The English translators not only imitated the mistake perpetrated by the translators of the Greek Mark but seem also to have done what is called in Tamil ஈயடிச்சான்வேலை (fly killing work). To explain how the mistake should have crept into the Greek text in the first instance and how the mistake was followed in an ஈயடிச்சான்

வேலை fashion by the English translators would require an articles as long as the present one and would further be of too technicial a nature for the general reader. So I do not propose to discus this matter. A few more words before I conclude.

(1) The word used in the Greek text for the English translation "had a impediment in speech" is mogilalon which scholars say is a rare word. The rare word mogilalon in my opinion seems to be connected with the Tamil word மூகை (moogai) dumb man. If my conjecture is correct then Peter's statemont "stark dumb before" and not Rev. Morison's opinion expressed in his commentary must be the correct one.

(2) Dean Alford says in a foot note to the Greek Testament that Ephphatha is an imperative word. The last 3 letters "tha" of the word Ephphatha are the same as the Tamil suffix டா (ta) of words like செய்டா, போடா etc. I mention this here since I forgot to mention it in the body of the article.

Tamil சொல்லு (sollu) becomes Helu in Canarese. Scholars will be able to say whether Seppu had a form like Heppu or Eppu in old spoken Canarese.

(3) Some western scholars are inclined to think that the Greek Gospels which have come down to us could not have been written so early as ardent theologians would put it. My discovery regarding the forgetting of the meaning of Ephpatha would shed light on this and other problems connected with that question.

II

ABBA=APPA.

Abba occurs in Mark XIV—36. That verse is as follows:—"And he said, Abba Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me; nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt". Abba in Aramaic language (the mother tongue of Jesus Christ) means father. A perusal of the commentaries would show that theologians are put to much trouble in properly explaining the use of Abba with father. Aramaic I have said is Aram--Aravam—Tamil. The moment one turns to India, the native land of Tamil, the Biblical verse becomes clear. No doubt Appa in Tamil means father, but it is not in that sense that Abba is used in the Bibilical verse.

Take the example அப்பா கிருஷ்ணா இந்தமாதிரி செய்யலாமா Appa Krishna, (can you do like this?) The term Appa in this Tamil sentence has no meaning at all, but it has great force; it is expressive more of the state of the utterer's feeling than any thing else. In moments of joy, in moments of pain or sorrow and in moments of excitement, Appa flows unconsciously out of the Tamilian's

lips. It is an untranslatable word the full significance of which only a man who has imbibed Tamil with his mother's milk can comprehend. Jesus was a Tamil Sittar. Like many a Tamil Saint Jesus must have known his horoscope well and Arudam must have told him that his hour of arrest and death were nigh. That was why he went to the Garden of Gethsamane to pray to God to give him strength to bear nobly the trials of the morrow. "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful unto death" said Jesus to his disciples then. The time of prayer in the garden was a time of intense excitement to Jesus. It was in the sense indicated by me therefore that the term Abba was used by Jesus. I shall now re-write the Biblical verse with the words "Abba Father" in Tamil so that a Tamilian may realise the correctness of my statement, "And he said அப்பா தெய்வமே, all things are possible unto thee ; take away this cup from me; nevertheless not what I will but what thou wilt". And it was with this prayer in his mouth, that Jesus was arrested. Fortified with such a prayer, Jesus mounted the Cross and carried out nobly the will of God praying to him to pardon his murderers in those beautiful words " Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

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